LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1501
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

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The Comedy of the Blackshirt and the Blackmailer

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The press of the world assures us that one of the most lamentable quarrels of modern times has just been most happily terminated by the reconciliation of the Pope and the Italian government. Leading articles in nearly every country have been written on the subject in golden ink, and we are congratulated for once on the serenity, the sagacity, the temperance of the modern spirit, which has found a solution of a conflict that pitted Guelf against Ghibelline in the days of Dante and even three centuries earlier saw the streets of Rome repeatedly reddened with blood. The Pope is now quite independent of political authority and can devote himself to his august mission with the full force of his spiritual fervor. The Italian State has not yielded a single one of its provinces, yet its all-wise ruler and even Mussolini now have the additional advantage of the Papal blessing. There are, to be sure, just a few sour anti-clericals who gnash their teeth at this fresh release of spiritual forces upon our age, but every man and woman of broad views and good taste will applaud this dignified and beneficent reconciliation.

I do not feel particularly sour but I am anti-clerical, and I happen to know a good deal about the history of the quarrel between Church and State in Italy which has been so fortunately adjusted: until the next quarrel.

What, you may ask, does the history matter? Why not let bygones be bygones and take the clergy as we find them today? And so on. One reason will suffice to begin with. When, a few days ago, Mussolini and Cardinal Gasparri exchanged the beautifully bound copies of the Treaty they had signed, Mussolini handed to the Cardinal a check for more than forty million dollars. This enormous sum was compensation for the occupation of the Papal States by Italy. We are therefore at once compelled to consult history about these Papal States; and I will tell you presently how the Papacy obtained them by some of the grossest forgeries that are known in the history of civilization, retarded the restoration of culture in Italy for ages by its bloody struggles to recover or retain them, exploited them so badly that they were, apart from Russia, the last part of Europe to linger in medieval barbarism in the nineteenth century, and was turned out of them at length with the willing consent of the enormous majority of their inhabitants. There is not a secular power in the world that would in such circumstances expect an indemnity. It was a colossal piece of blackmail.

But first let us see the recent development which has, for the time being, closed with this singular reconciliation: I say singular here because the aroma of the Pope's latest censures of Mussolini's "heresies" had hardly yet escaped from the Vatican windows when the Swiss guards and red cardinals were bowing him into the sacred palace. Twenty-five years ago I attended the International Congress of

Free Thought in Rome. On September 20 about ten thousand of us, from every country of Europe, marched gaily through the streets of Rome, singing very wicked songs, and gathered round the breach in the walls of Rome through which the Italian troops had entered on September 20, 1870. If any man had told the Pope in those terrible days that in the year 1929 the Italian government would present his successor with forty million dollars, an independent sovereignty, a railway station of his very own, the right to have the Catholic religion taught in every school in Italy, etc., he would have declined to believe the miracle. I am confident that until recent years no one in the Vatican ever dreamed of getting such concessions from the Italian government. There have, of course, been many attempts since 1870 to bring about a reconciliation. The royal family is Catholic and some of its members at least were not comfortable under the permanent ban of the Church. Feelers were put out by more than one Premier. Educated Italians chafed at this separation into blacks and whites, goats and sheep. But the Vatican was, to say the truth, not particularly inconvenienced by the situation, and it held out for better terms than any statesman dare propose to offer.

Since Mussolini attained power reconciliation has only been a matter of time. One of his first public actions was to present a valuable old library to the Pope. Why? Many people ask me for proof when I say that Mussolini would never have attained power if the

Pope had not consented, but I would remind them of something that appeared in the press only a few weeks ago. On March 25, 1929, there was an election in Italy for a new Chamber. I am not going to criticize Mussolini here. As his policy was endorsed at that election or plebiscite by about nine million votes to about a hundred thousand, it looks, in spite of the peculiar nature of the constitution, as if the Italian people have accepted him. Personally I am a democrat and a profound believer in ideas rather than force, and when the chief Fascist paper assures me, as it did only a week ago, that no one but a Fascist is in Italy allowed to criticize Fascism and nobody at all is allowed to criticize Mussolini, I am glad I do not live in Italy. However, that is their business. My point is that the Italian papers estimated that the Concordat which Mussolini had signed with the Pope in February, 1929, secured for him two million out of those nine million votes.

Mussolini, you may remind me, can get votes one way or other and need not have bothered about the Pope's supporters. Well, I am not going to suggest that he was simply eager to get the apostolical benediction. He was in earlier years an aggressive skeptic and I should say that he is today a diplomatic skeptic. When the terms of his Lateran Treaty with the Papacy were known there was a very angry protest in the skeptical wing of the Fascist army, which is a very important part of its strength: Mussolini therefore, you may remember, made a speech in Congress that

very nearly upset the whole beautiful arrangement: would have done so, I believe, but for the prospect of that little pink slip with forty million dollars written on it. The Holy Father nearly lost his temper: I mean in print, for he certainly lost it within the walls of the palace. I need quote only one part of Mussolini's provocative speech. His ancient-Roman intoxication so far carried him away that he said that if the Christian religion had not been transferred from Palestine to Rome it would have died out like the Essenian or any other Jewish sect. Mussolini was certainly right; but so was the Pope when he bluntly declared this heresy, for it is a denial of the divine foundation of the Roman Church. However, when heresy is wrapped up in checks for forty or fifty million dollars Popes are not, and never were, meticulous. A friend of mine once defined a good compromise as one in which you take all you can get of a good thing and hope for more later. So thinks Pius XI. If Italy goes back ten points out of a hundred toward the Middle Ages in ten years, may one not hope . . .

But that is the first matter which my readers would probably like me to make clear: to what extent has Italy gone back toward the Middle Ages? Let me leave to the last the question of territorial independence. The Pope's titles to it are, as I will show, ludicrous, but in principle it does not matter much, though it was the vital and most important of the Papal claims. I don't want to revive memories of the War, and I will say simply that during it the promise of restoration of the Papal ter-

ritory in some form was dangled before the eyes of the Pope, and Italy had very painful proof that, however skeptical educated Italy may be, the Pope can, if he will, and he did will, still do appalling injury. He is in the position, in a broad sense, of a blackmailer on a colossal scale, and his first demand is territorial independence, royal authority, even if it be only over the one hundred acres over which alone he has obtained absolute power by the present treaty. He has, of course, a limited power over a fringe of the city on the opposite side of the Tiber. He holds it in "fee simple," as the lawyers say, from the Italian government. But the territory round St. Peters and the Vatican over which he has absolute power as monarch is only about the size of an ordinary wheat-field in Kansas. It is enough. He is Pope-King once more. He is already coining his own money and printing his own stamps. The citizenship in his "City of the Vatican" is, it is true, still rather ambiguous; but, as Mussolini naughtily said in his offensive speech, "not many children are likely to be born in it." Its population is a few hundred clerics.

What is far more important from a broad social point of view is that the Catholic religion is explicitly recognized as the religion of the Kingdom of Italy, and the Vatican has been able to enforce some of the momentous consequences of that principle. The full text of the Treaty and Concordat are not yet available to me, and I am quoting the official summary. It, of course, represents a compromise. Mus-

solini admits that he made an approach to the Vatican two years ago, and that what chiefly held up the negotiations was the question of education. Contrary to what Catholic laymen say, and really believe, in America, the Church of Rome has never altered a line of its socio-clerical creed. It is, as I once before explained, the law of the Church today, constantly reprinted without the least modification, that apostates from the Catholic faith must be put to death. From this day forward any such apostate within the City of the Vatican ought, on the principles of Canon Law, to be burned at a stake. in the Vatican gardens; but, of course, there is no fear of the Pope giving away his principles in that fashion to simple-minded Britishers and Americans.

In the matter of religious toleration, again, the principles of Church law are adamant. Toleration is a sin. In their recent acrid quarrel the Pope scolded Mussolini for saying that under the new Italian constitution non-Catholic religions are "admitted." The word ought to be "tolerated." But, says the Pope with an air of liberality, he will not quarrel about a word. Of course not. He hates both words. Under the unchanged law of his Church every other religion must be forcibly suppressed in a Catholic state. He yields only for two reasons. Any attempt to enforce the pure Church doctrine in Italy would blow Mussolini sky-high for he has more skeptics than Catholics in his more zealous following; and any attempt to carry out the law, even if Italy permitted it, would give the show away in America and

Britain. The law is fairly enforced in Fascist Spain, it is true, but who knows or cares what is happening in Spain?

In the matter of education the Pope thought it safer to insist, but here again Mussolini was in danger if he yielded the full Catholic law. That law is absolute. In a Catholic State the Roman creed must be taught in every school and no other creed shall be taught in any school. If you press a Roman Catholic priest of the better-educated type on the matter he will say, with a laugh, that it is quite true that these are "abstract" principles of Church law, but why bother about abstract principles? In practice the Church cooperates with the country in which it has followers. How any person can be deceived by such language I do not understand. It is not a question of a difference between abstract principles and concrete maxims of conduct, but between principles and the restrictions which other people put on your power to carry them out.

Take the question of "liberty of conscience and freedom of discussion." There was not the least question of interfering with either under the new Treaty, Mussolini told Italy; just as American Catholics are assuring you that in no circumstances would their Church condemn that principle of the American Constitution. I wonder how many papers in America reproduced what the Pope said about it, in reply to Mussolini, as recently as May 30, 1929. He said frankly that the Catholic Church does not admit a right of freedom to follow one's conscience or freedom to discuss. He took the

high stand that any man who claims liberty to follow his conscience (in the matter of truth, remember) "puts the creature above the Creator": just as Torquemada said some centuries ago. He said that a man who was granted freedom to discuss might "easily deceive the good faith of uneducated hearers." Those two replies of the Pope to Mussolini ought to have been printed all over America. Mussolini made his famous speech in Congress defending his Treaty on May 13. The Pope made a short and sour reply in the Papal press on May 15, and on May 30 he issued a longer and very deliberate and important reply in the form of an open letter to Cardinal Gasparri, printed in the *Osservatore*, which flatly denies all the statements that American Catholics have ever made about the consistency of their Church's principles with those of the American Constitution. The doctrine of the Church—that where the majority of the people in a State are Catholics it must be made the State religion and that it will then tolerate no other religion, liberty or conscience or freedom of discussion—is so real and emphatic that, diplomatic as he is and dangerous as the circumstances were, Pius XI went out of his way to reaffirm it in that open letter to Cardinal Gasparri.

Another of those "logical and juridical consequences," in the Pope's words, of the establishment of Catholicism as the State religion is that it shall be taught in every school, college and university, and that no other religion and nothing opposed to it shall be taught in

them. Mussolini has actually handed over all the primary and secondary schools of Italy to the Pope. It is the most appalling betrayal of modern times, for, unlike the Fundamentalist legislators of Tennessee, Mussolini knows quite well what he is doing. The Catholic religion is now to be taught in every primary and secondary school in Italy. In the cities and large towns of Italy there are a few million children whose parents are skeptics. In the large towns of northern Italy there were before the war, Enrico Ferri, the cultivated Socialist leader, assured me, more than half a million adult Socialists and they were "irreconcilable adversaries of the Church." The most scurrilous anti-clerical paper in the world, the *Asino* (Ass), was published in Italy, and it had more than a million readers; and there was a second anti-Papal humorous journal, the *Papagallo.* Anybody who imagines that Italy is Catholic and so the adoption of religious lessons in all the schools does not matter is grievously wrong. Twenty years ago I found, after a very thorough inquiry, that at least six million out of the thirty-two million people of Italy were skeptics. The war, a Neapolitan professor told me, led to a great increase of skepticism because it brought peasants for the first time into contact with the anti-clericals of the cities and it revealed the treachery of the Papacy.

Mussolini has strained the loyalty of a very large part of his followers by endangering the whole of this progress that had been won in handing over the children to the Church. Re-

ligious instruction is a very useful element of the training of a citizen, he pleads. Here again the blackshirt and the blackmailer quarrel. It is the essential part of education—it is education—says the Pope. Let us use plain Italian, Mussolini retorts, and not talk like these French and English hypocrites: the essential aim of our education is to make "a race of conquerors." Very pretty sentiments, says the Holy Father ironically, for this age of peace and disarmament; but he surrenders to Mussolini's openly stated idea of training the nation for offensive war, and Mussolini surrenders to the Pope's claim to inoculate every child in Italy with superstition. "Education," the Pope murmurs, "is a matter for parents as well as the State to decide"; and in the same breath he claims to override the wishes of some millions of skeptical parents and impose religion on their children. This is all prehistoric rubbish about the family, says Mussolini in his reply: the State now determines education—and the State is Me (to put it in the French way). But in the end the little bit of pink paper soothes ruffled feelings, and the two augurs smile at each other across the altar, over the disemboweled remains of the victim.

Mussolini dare not yield to the Pope's demands of religious instruction in the universities. For twenty or thirty years nearly all the universities of Italy have had a skeptical atmosphere. When, in 1894, the sixtieth birthday of my friend Ernst Haeckel was celebrated, the Italian Minister of Public Instruction was the only State official in the world to send

him an official greeting. "In the name of the Italian universities I send you a heartfelt greeting," he wired. All the greater writers of Italy in recent decades—Carducci, Lombroso, Sergi, d'Annunzio, Croce, Ferrero, De Amicis, Ardigo, etc.—have been, or are, skeptics. It is another of the shrewd blows that Mussolini gave the Pope only a week or two ago that, in quoting French scholars to support his statement that Rome made Christianity a success, he regretted that the Italian Church had produced no writer worth quoting. The Pope had to swallow the insult. But he could not get the universities. Mussolini dare not do that.

Thus the statement that Canon Law has been adopted in Italy requires a very great deal of modification. Already I have pointed out several serious respects in which the Pope failed to get it enforced, and it seems to be the same in regard to marriage. When Catholics boast in America that the principles of the Church are perfectly consistent with those of a modern State the best thing to do is to ask them whether their Church in any country recognizes that marriage can be dissolved by divorce. Most emphatically not. Whether in Italy or America, the divorced person who remarries commits adultery. That is the unalterable teaching of the Catholic Church even in America. The American layman, even seeking political honors, knows that, but he possibly does not know that the Church holds that no one, Catholic or non-Catholic, must be permitted to seek a divorce. Naturally as long as the Church is in a minority it can do noth-

ing. It is quite liberal, bless you, and would not dream of interfering with the liberties of non-Catholics: until it gets the majority, and then it is compelled by its acknowledged principles to abolish divorce, suppress freedom of conscience, burn heretics, and so on.

What exactly the new marriage law is in Italy I cannot understand. The word divorce is not mentioned in the official summary of the new Treaty. It does not even make clear whether civil marriage will still be permitted. It speaks only of marriage before a priest, and it has at least the new element that banns are to be published in every case. The spoils seem to be divided in the usual way. The Church is to have the satisfaction of deciding all questions of annulment of marriages that have not been consummated, and no doubt it will look up the very numerous cases in its medieval archives, in some of which its lawyers found that the marriage had not been consummated after the parties had enjoyed the blessings of holy matrimony for several years. On the other hand, the State is to settle questions of "separation." It is all ominously vague; and it is still more ominous that Mussolini has pledged Italy to a recognition of the Papal claim that marriage is a sacrament, which is the essential ground of its interference. I must await the full text of the Treaty before I can say just how much of the Canon Law has been adopted as regards marriage and divorce. There is, of course, no principle whatever in the whole miserable business. Mussolini just calculates how much his enormous personal

prestige with the Italians will permit him to sacrifice of the liberties that have been won by the blood and torments of four generations of Italian skeptics.

The same compromise runs all through the Treaty. The Pope demanded that "apostate priests" shall be expelled from certain of the government services: probably teaching. It was a crafty and vindictive demand. Hundreds of priests have lost faith in the Church and this had been one of the best ways in which they could earn an honest living and avoid hypocrisy. The Pope cares nothing about their hypocrisy: they must find it more difficult to leave the Church. Mussolini consents; but, he adds, we shall have the same law of extradition with the Vatican as we have with other States. That was by no means acceptable to the Papacy. The new Papal State was to be a convenient sanctuary, in case Mussolini works his new laws in a way the Pope does not like, for men who defied him. Already Mussolini is biting his lips over the fact that the *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican organ, is removing to Papal territory and for the future it can say what it likes about him! But, says Mussolini, if I surrender your apostate priests, you shall surrender my fugitive criminals, and the deal went through.

In short the new Treaty, which has been praised all over the world, is a hotch-potch of compromises. It is a document in which a statesman sells a few of the liberties of his people and takes pride in the fact that he did not sell more. "Italy has not been Vatican-

ized," was the bugle-note of Mussolini's speech. No: not quite. But I wonder how d'Annunzio and Croce and their followers like the surrender of all their schools to the Pope, and the official declaration that marriage is a sacrament, and so on. I wonder how, as literary men, they understand Mussolini's assurance that under the new Treaty marriage is "regulated by Canon Law in its relation to Civil Law" (to which it is diametrically opposed), or that the new form of education is perfect in that it is "totalitarian," or that the "Free Sovereign State" (which bows to Canon Law) and the "Free Sovereign Church" do "not coexist but exist together." Mussolini, in plain English, has been blackmailed, and he is unhappy. The congratulations of the world are the silliest bunk I have read for a long time. The new arrangement just represents a partial triumph of medieval ideas in a State that boasted that it was the most modern of all: the most deadly encroachment on the school and the family of incarnate superstition and priestcraft in a State which boasts in the same breath that it is restoring the greatness of ancient Rome. Mussolini's great speech was mere verbiage. The Pope has one hand on the throat of Italy and he trusts soon to have two.

Why did Mussolini do it? And why have his followers, with much murmuring, consented? Let me first say a thing which I cannot prove. I believe that Mussolini promised it from the very beginning of his power. This is not the place to discuss either the character of Mussolini or the philosophy of Fascism. Let us

admit that political life had in Italy been corrupt and inefficient for several decades, and before the war Socialism was being seriously contemplated as an alternative. The Socialist vote rose from 60,000 in 1895 to 320,000 in 1904. A British anti-Socialist writing on Italy about the latter date said: "It is possible that the immediate future of Italy is in the hands of the Socialists, and, as I believe, it is certain that this is the case unless the king can bring himself to make peace with the Vatican." Other authorities said the same. But the British writer was wrong on one point: it was not in the least a question of the king "bringing himself" to make peace with the Vatican. There is nothing the royal family more ardently desired ever since 1870. One statesman after another attempted it. From the first the government has offered a magnificent revenue and other privileges to the Pope. At the Congress of Versailles in 1919 a very serious attempt was made to bring about reconciliation. Both Pope and King dreaded Socialism: Capital dreaded it: and even men who were sympathetic to its theory greatly doubted its competence. Mussolini had the shrewdness to see that he could manage to unite these elements. There is no need for me to recall the castor-oil campaign and the successive phases. My readers know that I do not admit that the end justifies the means: by which I mean, not that there is a golden rule written on the clouds, but that no stable and entirely satisfactory settlement of human affairs can be based on anything but universal social law. It is a plati-

tude of history that any power set up by force is some day overthrown by force.

However, that is the business of the Italians: the only way in which it may concern Americans is to point out, genially, how the same Pope who blesses Fascism in Italy and Spain cooperates with Socialism in Belgium and inspires a presidential candidate in America to say that it equally blesses the anti-Socialist and anti-Fascist ideas and institutions of that country. Mussolini knew his Pope quite well. It was going to be a hard bargain. The king and his statesmen were babies to deal with in comparison with Pius XI and his Gasparris. He had to take years to consolidate his position: to render such positive services to Italy that, as the *Impero* said the other day, nothing that he did was to be criticized by anybody. The Pope was pressing him. They have had lovers' quarrels—they probably hate and despise each other—for five years. But Mussolini has reached the limit of his internal services to Italy and he does not find it the rich country he dreamed. What did ancient Rome do? Conquered the world. Mussolini is, at least, going to conquer some more of it. Italy gave France a couple of provinces to bribe it to refrain from defending Rome and the Papal States. Mussolini wants them back. Italy's side of the Adriatic has no good harbors, while the Slav side has plenty. Mussolini wants a few. England has Malta, and Mussolini wants it. He wants a good many things. The Pope doesn't mind. He can bless peace in Geneva and swords in Rome as fluently as he can bless

Socialism in Brussels and the axe and rods of the Fascist in Rome.

Mussolini is said by his followers to be above all things blunt and outspoken. In many ways he is. He makes really good jokes in his most serious speeches. He says quite openly that he is going to train Italy in militarist and imperialist ideas. But in his recent speeches there is a little reticence. He makes many references to "certain other nations" whose noses have been put out of joint by his agreement with the Pope. He means France and Austria, but especially France. It was blackmail. There is no diplomacy so secret as that of the Vatican. Even in the recent British general election the Pope acted: apparently, this time, against Labor and in favor of the Conservatives, but, since the latter lost badly, Catholic interference is now denied. But we know a certain amount about how up to the time of the war the Vatican blackmailed England by promising or threatening action in Ireland, and it dealt with Germany in the same way as regards Poland, and how it played a diabolical game in the politics of the war itself. It will do so as long as war and the exploitation of subject races exist. It has played the same game with France over Alsace and Lorraine, and France has been much more respectful to the Holy See. I think—if I can get a millionaire to help me—of enrolling a small secret army to invade this new City of the Vatican, which Italian troops can no longer defend, capture the Papal archives, and publish

a selection from them in ten languages. The shade of Machiavelli would blush.

So, if you ask me what Mussolini got for all the tainted sacrifices he made, I shall say that it is the continued support of the Pope in Italy, silence in regard to the new imperialism, and no further encouragement to France and Austria. Each of the great chess-players, of course, regards this as only a preliminary move. Each has sacrificed a pawn or two. Italy can, when it wills, get everything back except its check and this unimportant "sovereignty" over a hundred and eight acres of ground. The Pope, on the other hand, believes that if he can refrain from quarreling until one generation of children has been trained under the new system of compulsory religious education he will get the whole Canon Law adopted. I am too old to be inquisitive about the future, but if you press me to say what I think will happen, I believe that the new "harmony" will gradually destroy harmony of the Fascist family in Italy and lead to a restoration of normal political conditions: and that there will then be an anti-clerical reaction which will make the next Pope wish that Pius XI had been as stupid as Pius X.

Therefore I smile at the hectic rejoicing everywhere of Catholics and the naive satisfaction of the press of the world that the Pope is now able to send his blessing to the King. It is just a part of the temporary reaction which I have predicted for the last five or six years. To some of my friends I recommend one aspect of it: it became possible largely

because Italian Socialists on the one hand were abandoning the rationalist education of the people on the ground that economics was so much more important, so they have lost everything, and because on the other hand middle-class Italians were (like Croce and his pupils) abandoning anti-clerical propaganda on the ground that it was no longer necessary. A word to the wise: which means the half-wise. Better is a dead Pope than a half-dead one, and never take a ride on the back of a tiger.

What really tickles me about the whole business is this huge indemnity for the loss of the Papal States, which the world at large finds so natural and proper. That was sheer blackmail money. Strictly speaking, it was a gross violation of Canon Law, which sternly forbids the alienation or sale of Papal territory. But do not think harshly of the Pope. He knew quite well, and Mussolini knew, that the Papacy had not a ghost of a title to any territory in Italy. As late as 1850, it is true, the Pope was king of a large amount of Italian territory which was known as the Papal States. The Pope had an army, and he enlisted troops from all over Europe to defend his territory. An old priest once described to me how he enlisted Irish youths in London for the Papal army, and some years later my old friend George Jacob Holyoake told me how he enlisted Englishmen in London to go out and fight them. It was a fair fight and the Pope-King lost, and there is not a single principle of political morality or international law, as such things go, on which he is entitled to compensation.

Quite the contrary. Facing me in my study as I write this are a number of relics of those roaring forties. There is a daguerreotype of Mazzini, exiled in London. There is an autographed drawing of Felice Orsini, who threw a bomb at Napoleon III and unfortunately missed him. There is an engraved card, signed by Kossuth and Mazzini, with war-horses and cannon and all sorts of bloody things on it, for which some workingman contributed a quarter to the funds for the liberation of Italy. Half of it groaned under the tyranny of the Pope and the Austrian Emperor. The Papal States were the most ghastly, ignorant, exploited, poisonous fragment that remained of medieval Europe. They were publicly described by the British ambassador to Rome as "the opprobrium of Europe." Two percent of the population attended some sort of schools for two hours a day. So many of the population turned brigands that it took nine thousand soldiers to guard the roads once when the King of Prussia traveled through. Bribery and graft were as rife in the Papal administration as in Tammany. And the clerics wrung out of this miserable peasantry so much money that the chief secretary of state, Cardinal Antonelli, who began life with nothing, left a hundred million lire and a bastard daughter, Countess Lambertini, clamoring for part of it. Of course, it is not in good taste to mention these facts in our manuals of European history today, so our journalists, when such an event as this Lateran Treaty comes along, glance into the history books, get a totally wrong impres-

sion of the facts, and strike the note of dignified approval of this from-every-point-of-view admirable reconciliation.

It happens that I have just finished for Mr. Haldeman-Julius the fourth volume of my forthcoming history of the Roman Church. This volume deals with the Roman Church in the Dark Ages, or from the time of Charlemagne to about 1050. It begins with a little picture of two of the highest clerics of the Roman Church holding their pontiff on the floor of a church while they try to cut out his eyes with knives; it closes with a Holy Father who was notorious for murder, fornication, pederasty, etc.; and it fills the interval between the two with such accounts of brutality in Rome and Europe as will make the readers shudder. Curiously enough, while I wrote it I received from America the latest manual of the history of medieval Europe, for college use, in which, as is now the fashion, the Dark Ages are explained to be a myth of the nineteenth century. Two professors write the book—imagine the concentration of academic lore—and I doubt if either of them ever read a single one of the medieval chronicles and Papal documents which are the real source of our knowledge. Dean Ford, of the University of Minnesota, writes the prefaces, and he begins his remarks by saying:

> There was a time when a goodly part of the period covered by this volume was called the Dark Ages . . . Happily the clouds of dust have cleared from the pages of modern writers, and we see now the works and worth of the centuries between Romulus Augustulus and Richelieu.

The introduction of Augustulus and Richelieu is fudge. No one ever called that stretch of time the Dark Ages. But the idea that any serious historian has discovered more light or less brutality in the Dark Ages than was supposed fifty years ago is just as erroneous. The facts about the Dark Ages are suppressed in modern school manuals. That is the only difference. And that is why in the world's press the Catholic Church succeeds in passing off its blackmail money as legal compensation, for the Papal States were acquired in the Dark Ages and by the darkest of methods.

Gregory the Great was the first founder of the estates of the Roman Church. He persuaded people that the end of the world was really coming this time. I believe that he honestly thought so, but there was very decidedly method in his madness. If it was more difficult for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to get through the eye of a needle, any rich person who was really pious wanted to prepare for the dissolution by getting rid of his property. But it would certainly not be Christian charity to put that handicap on one's fellows, however willing they may have been to receive it. The Church must receive it, and Pope Gregory, when he quitted the earth, left his Church or the Roman See the largest land owner in the world: the owner of fifteen hundred square miles of profitable and well managed estate, tilled by slave and serf labor, yielding what was at that time the colossal revenue of between a million and a half and two million dollars a year.

When the Lombards later overran Italy, they took over these estates like those of other people, and it was a century or two later that the Papal States, not merely estates, began. A boorish, profoundly ignorant Frank King was induced to come to Italy, to chastise the Lombards, and to hand over several provinces to the Pope. They were recovered by the Lombards and the Pope forged a letter in the name of St. Peter to work on the superstition of the Frank King and bring him back. Again the Lombards recovered the provinces, and Charlemagne was induced to come and recover them for the Papacy. And here we plainly perceive what we merely suspect in the case of the earlier king. The Popes proved their title to these provinces by submitting to Charlemagne a document, if not three documents, the forgery of which (in Rome, by the Papal clerks) is so gross and crude that there is not even a Catholic scholar today who dare say otherwise. The "Donation of Constantine" was a forged deed purporting to show that when the Emperor Constantine was driven out of Rome and went to build Constantinople, he handed over nearly the whole of Italy to the Papacy. Even the Catholic Encyclopedia, which is unblushing in many of its statements, admits that that document is a forgery. That is the document on which the ownership and rule of the Papal States are based.

The only alternative is to appeal to the right of the sword. Pippin and Charlemagne, and later Otto and Henry and all the other kings that the Popes summoned to draw a bloody

trail across Italy, conquered these lands and annexed them to the Papacy. But in all history it has been recognized that one sword is as good as another. Throughout the whole of this period the Popes recognized the right of conquest; and Pius XI knows quite well that in part he has just been bribed to recognize it again whenever Mussolini requires. It may be convenient for Popes to hold that it is quite just for an army to conquer and annex any territory except what belongs to themselves, but most people are not impressed. The real basis of the Papal claim is one of the most audacious forgeries in all literature.

Further, a very careful analysis of the real reasons why the medieval Papacy was so appallingly degraded and actually checked the restoration of civilization has convinced me that the possession of this "temporal power" was the most important of all. During three periods of from fifty to a hundred and fifty years the Papal court was degraded by its wealth: by the passions which that wealth provoked in candidates for the Roman bishopric and the sordid characters it attracted. The recording angel must have an enormous ledger reserved for the wars, the murders, the horrible outrages, and the gross sensuality to which the revenue of the Papal States led from the eighth century to the sixteenth. On the very eve of the Reformation Pope Julius was cursing and fuming—I speak quite literally—as he led his troops in the struggle; and Cesare Borgia had only recently fouled the whole region with his crimes to recover them. Quite the

most humane of all these struggles—indeed the only one that was just—was when in the nineteenth century the Sardinian troops drove out the Austrians, smashed the Papal army, and compelled the Pope to confine himself to what are called spiritual matters. Moreover, by an act of humanity without precedent in previous history the inhabitants of the conquered states and cities were invited to say by plebiscite whether they wanted to enter the Kingdom of United Italy. In one province the vote was 90,075 for Italy and 380 for the Pope: in another province it was 133,783 for Italy and 1,212 for the Pope: in the city and province of Rome it was 130,000 for union and 1,500 for the Pope: in the city proper it was 40,785 for union and 46 for the Pope, most of the Catholics abstaining.

The idea of "compensation" is absurd. In 1871 the Italian government actually offered compensation, in spite of the overwhelming plebiscite: it offered to pay the Vatican more than half a million dollars a year. The Pope refused. What he is now taking is arrears of the salary he refused, with interest. He has not the ghost of a title to it. It is blackmail money. Nay, it may be worse; it may be blood money. But it in any case leaves the hands of Mussolini and the King of Italy red with the blood of the tens of thousands of Italians who died in the nineteenth century to win the liberties which have been surrendered.

MUSSOLINI AND BIRTH CONTROL

John Langdon-Davies

The figures have recently been announced of the births and deaths in Italy during the past quarter of 1929. They show fewer births and more deaths than in the corresponding quarter of 1928, a fact which has been greeted with loud weeping and gnashing of teeth by the Italian press and by the speech-making Fascisti.

Now perhaps the most disturbing thing in the European scene today is the Italian birth rate. It is as big as in Spain but fortunately, speaking quite brutally, in that country, one in every three Spaniards born is safely dead before it reaches the age of five; so that the rate of increase is very small. Moreover Spain, unlike Italy, has acres of blank spaces to be filled up before there can be even the beginning of a Spanish population problem. But look at Italy.

She is predominantly an agricultural country; only thirteen percent of her population lives in towns, compared with twenty-five percent in the United States and thirty-eight in England. Yet she already has a density of three hundred and twenty-nine people to the square mile, more than eight times that of the United States, greater than industrialized Germany. She had a birth rate of twenty-seven and a half in 1925, compared with one of eighteen in England. Her natural increase of population in that year was ten for every thou-

sand people. She can no longer send emigrants to America; she has no colonies worth calling such; she has no raw materials at home. Will she burst and burst Europe at the same time?

In circumstances such as these any reasonable human being would expect that a reduction of the birth rate would be hailed with delight by Mussolini and his compatriots. Far from it, they are talking of violent measures to "combat the declining birth rate," to avoid the "decadence which has overtaken France." In Italian towns you can see notices calling on Italian mothers to have more and more children. Suppose they do, what will it mean to them and to the world?

Population problems are the real fundamental problems of modern social existence and sooner or later every statesman in the world is bound to take notice of such things as the Italian birth rate. And yet how blind we are to their significance. The history of mankind offers many examples of how morals and faiths are founded on the necessities of the moment with regard to population. Thus the old Hebrews were conquerors of a new land which needed hands to till it and subdue it; is it not natural that the first commandment they put into the mouth of their God was "be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth"? A very sensible commandment, too, in the circumstances; what was not so sensible was when a modern Christian missioner in India said to me that he was quite sure that the teeming masses of India could be fed and made happy in spite of a birth rate so huge

that plagues, pestilences and famines are needed to right it, and to justify his optimism quoted "God's first commandment, which he would not have given had he known it to be impossible to carry out."

Again, when the Mormons marched across the Rockies and discovered a wilderness which they made to blossom as the rose, their God reiterated the Hebrew God's first commandment and ordained polygamy as a means to the end. And America as a whole, full of bare spaces until quite recently, has attacked birth control far more hotly than the European countries which are not Catholic. As the country has filled up, the outcry has been lessened, until a full country will ignore, if not repeal, the Comstock laws. Thus does morality wait upon economic necessity. In England where we are grossly overpopulated a new morality has arisen which denies the Hebrew God's commandment; and quite soon we shall find that birth control is regarded as moral and large families as immoral. Circumstances indeed alter cases.

And so while birth rates in America, England, France, Germany are falling rapidly and steadily; in England from 34 to 16 in about fifty years; in the Catholic countries, Italy and Spain, for example, only a slight decrease has set in, a slight decrease to be attacked furiously by every force in church and state. Spain nobody need worry about; but Italy is a problem and a worry. At present she is overflowing into France by the hundred thousand and at the same time abusing France in speech

and newspaper articles. Can that bring any good to Europe and the World?

You can see how population problems shape a country's outlook by comparing Italy and Spain and their attitude to emigration. Spain empty, uncultivated, void, does everything possible to prevent emigration; ship companies may not advertise for emigrants; it is made as difficult and as profitless as possible to cater for them. Italy bursting with human beings cried aloud until recently that the rest of the world ought to be made to receive the surplus from the Italian cradles, or incubators. Now that the doors are shut Mussolini has changed his tune, he is making the best of a bad job, which means with him making the bad job worse—"more babies for Italy—Italian mothers! Italy needs more sons to fight for her." Where can it end?

Heaven forbid that anyone should imagine that I think the world better off if the Anglo-Saxons outnumber the Latins and worse off if they do not: but perhaps the economic necessities of the human race as a whole will force into being a League of Low-birthrate Nations to protect themselves from the lowering in standard of living which must come from vast surplus populations of homeless, foodless Italians and the rest, who cling to unrestricted breeding in a restricted world.